From Middle School to High School: Helping 8th Graders Transition

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Learning Objectives

• Examine the components of a successful transition plan
• Develop effective techniques to educate students & parents about HS
• Coordinate various stakeholder perspectives in creating transition plans
About MISD

- McKinney ISD is located about 30 miles north of Dallas and serves ~25,000 students
- MISD is one of the fastest growing districts in the state of Texas
- MISD currently has 5 Middle Schools (Gr. 6-8) & 3 High Schools
- Student to Counselor Ratio >500:1
What do 8th graders need to successfully transition?
The Challenge Defined:

“For many students, entry into ninth grade is their first exposure to a completely departmentalized curriculum, extensive academic tracking, ordering of ability via class rankings, and recurrent reminders of graduation requirements. Those practices define students’ academic identity and their opportunities after high school at a developmental stage when they are still exploring multiple identities and weighing options about who they are and who they hope to become.”

~ Bennar & Graham, 2009
Cohen & Smeardon, 2009

• Full transition programs target 3 groups—students, parents, and staff—focusing on any one by itself not as effective

• Allow students to test the high school waters:
  – shadowing /visits
  – interacting with older students
  – Gathering information on courses & facilities

• Parental involvement is key & will help to maintain higher levels of involvement throughout HS.
Family-School Connections
Middle School Counselor as a Bridge

• Family –School Connections....allow the flow of information in both directions—information to parents about what to do for children, information to schools about a child's special needs, talents, and circumstances.

• The optimal situation...parents learning about the available options for students in high school from high school personnel, high school personnel learning more about incoming students and what they need from parents, and the middle school personnel who are more likely to have established ties to both sides representing high schools and advocating for families.

~Crosnoe, 2009
A few more tips...

• Fostering relationships early in HS may help ease adjustment (Fish Camp)
• Middle School Students are most likely to seek information from their parents (particularly in rural areas)
• Males are less likely to seek help in making the transition
The “TASKS”

- Education
  - Graduation Plans
  - Course Requirements
- Description of Course Offerings
- Four Year Planning
- Introduction to the Campus
- Course Registration
- Course Verification
- Freshman Orientation (Fish Camp)
Preparation & Vertical Teaming
Target Dates

- Course Proposals
- Content Specialists Review
- APG Developed/Updated
- Course Catalog & New Numbers Loaded
- Technology Consultation
- Counselor Training in New Courses/Curriculum Updates
- HS/MS Counselor Four Year Planning Training
- HS/MS Teaming Weeks
- Showcase
- Course Requests Entered
- Verification Released
- Projected Enrollment/Master Schedule Development
- Staffing
- Schedules Released to students
Divide & Conquer

HS Responsibilities
• Develop Educational Guidance presentation
• Train/Mentor MS counselors in graduation requirements & course sequences
• Report to MS campuses for educational guidance for students & parent evening meeting
• Showcase
• Report to MS campuses for assistance with entering registration (course selections)
• Mail verifications
• Fishcamp

MS Responsibilities
• Arrange/Schedule classes for guidance presentation
• Set-up technology/facilities
• Collate materials /teacher recommendations
• Advertise registration events to parents & students
• Host parent educational meeting
• 4 Year Plan development
• Arrange/Schedule classes for entering course selections
• Make course adjustments during verifications
• Ensure late enrolling/new students complete 4 year plan and 9th grade registration card
Variations on a Theme

• From a district planning perspective, certain tasks must adhere to a common timeline. Be clear about non-negotiable dates from the beginning.

• Respect the diversity of your campuses. It’s okay to be asynchronous at times. It’s okay to use different methods to meet student needs.

• Communication is key.
4 Year Plan Training

• Developed & Led by HS counselors in response to MS requests for more help with understanding course sequences
• Based on common situations
• Held prior to registration at monthly district counselor meeting
General Suggestions

• **Make note of MS Credits**
  – Students can chart their progress on the transcript review (p.8) of APG
  – Use ‘Summer or Online’ spaces to add in notes if needed

• **Attack the Plan in a Sequence**
  1) Cores in first
  2) World Language
  3) CTE courses
  4) Other graduation requirements
  5) Complimentary Electives

• **Note the location of Advanced CTE courses**
  – Read the flowchart bottom to top

• **Remember plans are subject to change**
  – If unsure use generic terms like “Math” rather than Algebra II, this way a space is saved for the course.
Meet William

- William loves animals and wants to be an animal trainer (in fact, William has a parrot that he has already trained to talk.)
- William loves history and watches a lot of Animal Planet
- William is zoned for North
First Course

Agriculture, Food, and Natural Resources

- Principles of Agriculture, Food, & Natural Resources [9-12] (1) ALL
  - Livestock Production [10-12] (.5) ALL
  - Small Animal Management [10-12] (.5) ALL
  - Veterinary Medical Applications [11-12] (1) ALL
  - Veterinary Tech Practicum [12] (2) MNHS

- FLORAL DESIGN & LANDSCAPE MANAGEMENT
  - Principles & Elements of Floral Design [9-12] (1) MBHS

  - Advanced Animal Science [12] (1) ALL

- Agriculture Mechanical Systems
  - Agricultural Mechanics & Metal Technologies [10-12] (1) MHSA
    - Small Engine Technology [10-12] (1) MNHS & MHSA
    - Small Engine Technology [11-12] (2) MNHS & MHSA
Considerations for William

• William wants to train animals. The vet tech sequence would be appropriate for his goals. [Students interested in becoming a veterinarians should additionally seek advanced science courses]

• William loves history

• William is zoned to take advantage of the full sequence of courses.
William’s Four Year Plan

Note: if William wanted to be in Choir all 4 years, Health/Prof. Com. and both PE courses could be done in the summer. The business classes could be eliminated.
Educational Guidance
The MISD Academic Planning Guide is the official document outlining course descriptions, requirements and policies, and other pertinent information.

www.mckinneyisd.net
APG Organization

• MISD Vision Statement
• Planning Tools
  – Timelines
  – Graduation Requirements
  – Testing Information
  – Advanced Course Policies
  – GPA/Rank
  – UIL

• Course Descriptions
  – Core Areas
  – CTE
    • Flowcharts
    • Descriptions
  – Fine Arts
  – Athletics
Graduation Requirements

– To ensure consistent information, we developed a narrated Powerpoint presentation to use at all 5 middle schools for both students & parents
– Runs just under 20 minutes long
– Posted to the website to be accessible for repeat viewings, for absent students or for new students to the district to view
Implementation Models

• During the HS/MS Teaming Weeks, counselors work collaboratively in a schedule aligned by feeder patterns
• Takes place at MS campus
• Students grouped in various configurations:
  – By class
  – Combined classes
  – By level
  – Whole group assembly
# Four Year Plan

For Students Entering 9th Grade in Fall 2012

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<th>Name</th>
<th>ID#</th>
<th>9th Grade</th>
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**Summer or Online:**
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### Subject Area

**Recommended Plan**

- **English – required**: 4 credits: English I, II, III, IV
- **Math – required**: 4 credits: MUST INCLUDE: Algebra I, Geometry, Algebra II, and a 4th year of math, or Algebra I, Geometry, Math Models, Algebra II
- **Science – required**: 4 credits: MUST INCLUDE: Biology, Chemistry, Physics, 4th year of science, or IPC, Biology, Chemistry, Physics, 4th year of science, or IPC must be completed before Chemistry or Physics
- **Fine Arts**: 1.0 credit: Art, Music, Theatre, Dance
- **Speech**: 5 credit Professional Communications
- **Health**: 5 Health (or Principles of Health Science)
- **Languages Other Than English**: 2.0 credits: Must consist of level I and level II in the same language
- **Physical Education**: 1.0 credit
- **Electives**: 5.0 credits

**Distinguished Achievement Plan**

- **English – required**: 4 credits: English I, II, III, IV
- **Math – required**: 4 credits, MUST INCLUDE: Algebra I, Geometry, Algebra II, and a 4th year of math
- **Science – required**: 4 credits, MUST INCLUDE: Biology, Chemistry, Physics, 4th year of science, or IPC, Biology, Chemistry, Physics, 4th year of science, or IPC cannot count toward D.A.P.
- **Fine Arts**: 1.0 credit: Art, Music, Theatre, Dance
- **Speech**: 5 credit Professional Communications
- **Health**: 5 Health (or Principles of Health Science)
- **Languages Other Than English**: 3.0 credits: Must consist of level I, level II, and level III in the same language
- **Physical Education**: 1.0 credit
- **Electives**: 4.0 credits

**TOTAL**: 26 credits (must include 4 advanced courses)

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*4th year of math options: Foundations for College Math, Pre-Calculus, AP Statistics, AP Calculus AB or BC, dual credit College Algebra or Calculus, AP Computer Science.


**Signatures:**
- Student
- Parent
- Counselor

Achieve Texas Career Cluster: ____________________________
### Registration Card

**FRONT**

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<tr>
<th>Student Information</th>
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**ELECTIVE COURSE OFFERINGS: Grade 9**

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<th>Course Offerings</th>
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<td>English and Reading</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mathematics and Technology</td>
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<td>Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics</td>
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<tr>
<td>Physical Education</td>
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<td>Career and Technical Education</td>
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<td>Principles and Elements of Design</td>
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### BACK

**McKinney ISD**

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<tr>
<th>Course Offerings</th>
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<tr>
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<td>Fine Arts</td>
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<td>Speech</td>
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<td>Health Science</td>
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<td>Hospitality and Tourism</td>
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<td>American Sign Language</td>
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<td>French I</td>
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<td>Technology Applications</td>
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**TCA Texas Counseling Association**
COPIES!!!

• 4 Year Plan—triplicate
  – White copy to cumulative folder
  – Yellow copy kept with registration card
  – Pink copy back to student

• Registration Card—duplicate
  – White copy to student
  – Manilla Cardstock (pressure sensitive) to counselor
  – Different Color Ink to help distinguish grade levels
Parent Education

• Evening Meetings held on middle school campus; hosted by MS principal & counselor
• View educational presentation
• Q & A
Introduction to HS
Showcase

• Celebration/Carnival Atmosphere
• Teachers facilitate as current students explain courses and do live demonstrations
• Interactive Exhibits
• Fine Art Performances
• Best of Show stage
• Club & Organization Fair
• Counselor Corner & PTO Booth
• Parent Meetings
Contact Sheets

• Athletics
• Fine Arts
• Special Programs
  – Student Media (Yearbook/Broadcasting)
  – Academic Decathlon
  – Debate
  – Student Council
  – AVID
Showcase Parent Meeting

“Tips & Extras” Presentation

• Staying Informed (Where to find Info online, How to sign-up for the newsletter, what to look for during the 1st week, syllabi, online grade monitoring, mobile app)

• Lockers, Lunches, & Supplies

• Grading Policies

• Freshman Year Timeline
CTE Field Trip

• Representative students from our CTE courses go to MS campus to discuss their program in classes
• Contact information/brochures for the programs are provided
• HS students bring “props”
• 8th graders have the opportunity to ask questions
• District CTE funds cover the bus cost
PreAP Parent Meeting

- Led by team of counselors, PreAP teachers & administrators
- Explanation of AP philosophy & program goals
- Review of PreAP contract
- Discussion of Course Requirements
Entering Course Requests
Registration Models

• HS Counselors to MS campuses
• Collect cards & answer “last-minute” questions
• MS/HS counselors team together to enter the course requests
  – Technology Issue—Make sure HS counselors can access MS students from all campuses.
  – Have a plan for where extra copies go
Online Registration!?!?

Good Points:
• Increases the sense of ownership in course selections
• Reinforcement of the variety of offerings
• Exposure to our online student information center

Potential Obstacles:
• Time consuming
• Wrong course numbers
• Technical Flaws (freezing/crashing/etc)
• Difficult to limit access
Verifications & Special Populations
Verifications

• Confirmation of registration selections mailed home
• Add/Drop form
• PreAP/AP contracts
• Summer Reading/Assignments
Special Populations

• Special Education Lead attends 8th grade Transition ARDs
• Athletic Director, Choir and Band teachers all visit MS campuses to discuss program requirements and explain the audition/try-out process
• LEP staffing
• 504 staffing
Summer Tasks
Fish Camp

Held 2 weeks prior to 1st day of school
Two hours in the afternoon
Tour/Scavenger Hunt:
  (upperclassman serve as guides AVID, STUCO, Band)
Freshman Teachers

Parent Meeting led by Counselors
Student Meeting led by Administrators
Pep Rally
Club/Organization Fair
Schedule Pickup?

***Coordinate facilities/times with summer programs
Fishcamp Meetings

• Parent Meeting:
  – Lockers/Books
  – Supplies
  – Lunches
  – School Colors/Mascot
  – Course Information
  – Grading Policies
  – How to Get Connected
    • Principal’s Newsletter
    • Online Resources
    • PTO

• Student Meeting
  – Traditions
  – School Colors/Song/Mascot
  – House Structure
  – Code of Conduct
  – HS Academic Expectations
  – 1st Day Tips
Summer Enrollments

- Educational ppt on Graduation Requirements
- Online Forms
- 4 year plan & registration cards
- “New to MHS” Summary sheet
Points for Growth in MISD

• Spanish Language Materials
• Electronic 4 Year Plans
• Providing Transportation to Showcase/Fish Camp
Crowdsourcing

• Share your best practices with the group?
• Questions??
Contact Information

• Jennifer Akins
  – jakins@mckinneyisd.net
  – 469-742-5722

• Stewart Herrington
  – sherrington@mckinneyisd.net
  – 469-742-5700